

Sidewalk Committee Proposed

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

This week, selectmen initiated discussion of a town-wide policy on sidewalks and invited people who want to serve on a new committee to create this policy to step forward.

At their Monday night meeting, selectmen reviewed Department of Public Works Director Walter Tonaszuck's ideas for a sidewalk policy, which included suggestions on where to consider sidewalk projects, how to pay for them with betterments and when to build them.

Tonaszuck proposed having the town consider sidewalks on streets where more than 50 percent of the residents request them.

"It is important that there be local support from the people who are directly affected," he said.

He felt that sidewalks should be built at the same time a street was being reconstructed. Tonaszuck suggested that a sidewalk's design depend on its street, and he was in favor of establishing construction standards for rural, low volume, and busy streets.

In addition, Tonaszuck recommended the town designate "priority pedestrian corridors, i.e. those streets where sidewalk construction will benefit the greatest number." Sidewalks should be included in new developments and if possible, they should aid pedestrian access to other destinations and link neighborhoods, he added.

As for betterments, Tonaszuck proposed they be assessed for "petitioned projects that benefit primarily

the petitioners" and that abutters whose frontage is contiguous to the proposed sidewalk pay for 50 percent of the construction costs. "If they want them for themselves, then maybe they should share in the costs," he explained.

John Taft of Moulton Rd. was against betterments: "It seems to me if you're thinking betterments, don't. But if you do, have a formula and make it fair." He was concerned about abutters to sidewalks who had more frontage than others and also wondered why people whose homes didn't abut sidewalks shouldn't have to pay for them.

Members of the audience expressed concerns about who would maintain sidewalks, shovel them, and be liable if anyone was hurt on them. Selectman Andre Martecchini said that it is usually the person whose house abuts the sidewalk who is responsible for shoveling it and has the liability if they don't do the maintenance and someone is hurt. Tonaszuck said a bylaw would have to be created to address these issues.

Selectmen felt a sidewalk committee should prioritize which streets need sidewalks

the most. Joe Shea, chairman of the Highway Safety Advisory Committee, said his group had studied that and had that information for three or four streets.

Shea added that a sidewalk committee should also review who would maintain a walkway that runs in front of a non-profit location, such as Lapham Woods owned by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society on Depot St.

Selectmen said the committee should receive input from the Highway Safety Advisory Committee, the planning board, finance committee, Garden Club and Duxbury Rural and Historical Society. Anyone interested in serving can contact the selectmen's office at town hall. Selectmen will discuss this issue again in three or four weeks.

Related to the sidewalk policy issue are the sidewalks for Chestnut St., which were approved by town meeting earlier this month. Tonaszuck said he has begun surveying that street to find the best location for the walkway and when he has more information he will meet with neighbors and return to selectmen with plans.